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Thursday, January 4, 1940

Eureka! a new idea and a mighty good one! "Boone pointed out that the Darwinian theory (of natural selection) leaves the argument from design essentially where it was before. The really significant question, as he says, has to do not with the survival of the fittest but with their "arrival," and this on the Darwinian theory remains as much of a mystery as ever."

What I said above (p.140 typescript) about the Psalmist's prayers does not apply to his ideas and sentiments. I find the latter for the most part both stirring and exalting. I just happened to glance at the 94th psalm. It is too bad that he makes use of the term (p.86) . Very few know that he uses that term in the sense "justice" and take for granted that he really means vengeance in the old barbaric sense. But otherwise it is a great psalm. I was especially touched by the feeling he voices of finding himself alone in his struggle against evil doers. (p.86)

It takes, however, the "American Translation" to bring out the full value of the text.

When I read the verse I was tempted to conclude that it represented the only sample of teleological thinking in the Bible. In fact Knudson quotes this verse/ⁱⁿ the course of his argument about teleology. But when I examined the context, I noted that it had nothing to do with proving the existence of God, but rather with the fact that God cared and that it sought to contravene the statement of the wicked, who say .

SAJ: The reactionary spirit at the SAJ

Ira just spoke to me over the phone concerning the interview he had had today with Joe Levy at lunch. I am all atremle with rage into which his report threw me, rage at Joe Levy and at the moral

rotteness which has gotten possession of our people. After all these years of trying to develop a Jewish life that would aspire at least to live up to the ideals proposed by Judaism, comes along this man who was a member of the Jewish Center and who helped me organize the SAJ and makes demands upon Ira and me that represent all the evils which I had believed I had fled from in resigning from the Center. Joseph Levy has now become a perfect replica of the late Joseph H. Cohen minus some of his sincerity. He has grown in wealth and power and has acquired an arrogance that makes every time I speak with him a trying occasion, because of the self-control I have to exercise in hiding my hatred for him. In the earlier years of our association with each other I really did like him quite a bit. But now his very presence is to me irritating. A deep abyss has arisen between us, but I have to go on pretending that I can work with him.

The following is the policy he wants Ira and me to pursue in the SAJ to organize the young people, with his daughter Miriam at the head, into an exclusive group that would give socials and dances at various hotels. He frankly stated that the worship of money and snobbery should be the means employed in working up prestige for the SAJ. What he says about the end justifying the means, the end being the achievement of the purposes of the SAJ is only a sop he threw to Ira. He is clever enough to know that there is no connection between such means as yielding to the vulgar glorification of money and the passion for snobbery and such ends as the avowed aims of the SAJ.

Here we have a clear proof of the justice of any contention that congregations are merely social clubs organized for the self-inflation of their members. The fundamental purpose of fostering Jewish ideals and keeping the Jewish people alive and functioning on a high level is as remote from the minds of the average trustee of a congregation as the milky way is from the earth.

Wherever one turns, whatever one reads is enough to throw one into a fit of despair. The article by Col. Patterson in the American Jewish Chronicle (Jan. 1/40) entitled "Behind the Palestine Betrayal" the reference in today's Jewish Morning Journal to the "Marrano" Jews in the British Army who justify their denial of Judaism on the ground that if captured by the Nazis their lot would be worse than that of the other soldiers -- these and similar items which reflect conditions under which no other people in the world has to endure, I find difficult to reconcile with my search after meaning and the reality of God in this ~~stark~~ satanic kind of a world.

What hope is there that the human mind will ever get itself straightened out, since it can twist itself into such ridiculous pos-
turings as are exhibited in Nazi and Communist type of reasoning? This kind of mental gymnastics has played an important part in keeping the human being on the animal level. Take, e.g. such mental antics as exhibited by the followers of Shabbatai Zebi, who were not stumped in the least when he accepted Mohammedanism. On the contrary they saw in his action a verification of his role as Messiah. Even philosophers have shown themselves adept in this kind of mental acrobatics. Take e.g. the following: "Since the time of Thomas Aquinas it has been the established teaching of the church that the Trinity is a supernatural mystery which the human reason can never hope to comprehend. Nalebranche advanced the interesting theory (!) that the persistence of the doctrine in the face of this fact was an evidence of the special intervention of Divine Providence." (Knudson, The Philosophy of Personalism, p. 332)

According to Willen, the Federation campaign organizer, the difficulty which the Jewish educational activity made possible by the Friedman Fund will have to overcome is that Jewish education is associated in people's minds with Orthodoxy and Zionism.

Friday, January 5, 1940

I love these half hour walks in the morning with their yield of fruitful ideas. I have just come back with the following: The theory that the will-to-salvation is the source of our belief in God ~~and~~ throws a new light on the concepts of freedom of the will and immortality. Freedom of the will, from the viewpoint of that theory, is the freedom man has in choosing what he shall consider salvation or life abundant. Even if environmental influences play a great part in determining one's conception of salvation there is always some flaw in the armor of those influences. Moreover, if we view the problem of freedom not as an individual one, but as one in which society as a whole is involved, there can be no question that the opportunity to choose the higher, i.e. the more socialized and spiritual type of salvation is always present.

As for the immortality, that too is quite understandable in the light of this theory. By choosing as his goal an inferior type of salvation man fails to identify himself with that power which makes for life most abundant. But if his goal is the highest type of salvation, he identifies himself with that power. He himself becomes an agency in bringing about the life that is most enduring and most worthwhile and as such shares in the product of his efforts.

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Saturday night, January 6, 1940

I don't suppose preachers often resort to prayer as I did today when I used it to vent my spleen against Joseph Levy, the little Napoleon of the SAJ. In this respect my use of prayer probably comes nearest to that of the Psalmist. But if ever any one will read this, he will at least know what I objected to in my "Enemy," whereas the Psalmist never took the trouble to tell us specifically what kind of people his enemies were. The following is what I said in part before the Ark after the scroll of the Torah was put back:

Give us understanding and we shall live. Give us understanding of what we ought to be and what we ought to do. Make us realize how often we either thoughtlessly or deliberately flout what we know to be the right. Let us not deceive our conscience or imagine we can deceive Thee by using our human weakness as an excuse for our vanity and our greed. Keep us from using Thy name in vain. Put fear into our hearts against the desecration of any sacred cause that is dedicated to Thy service as a shield for our selfish purposes. Grant that the faith we profess with our lips may shame away our mean ~~intents~~ ~~intents~~ and so purify our hearts of all dross of selfishness that we may serve Thee in sincerity and truth.

Joseph Levy was in the audience. I used a special device to catch his attention. Having heard him once quoting with approval the verse "Give me understanding and I shall live" which I would use in the reading before the Scroll was taken out, I inserted that verse in the prayer in the hope that it would compel his attention to the rest of what I had to say.

I preached this morning on the subject "How Man Comes to Know God." It was probably one of the most successful sermons I have ever given. In the afternoon we had a Se'udah at which questions were asked and which Ira answered very well.

Pedagogically it is a good thing to discuss philosophical and metaphysical problems both in class and pulpit because it is a compliment to the students or to the audience in that you regard them as capable of understanding matters that call for considerable mental effort. Of course they only feel the compliment when you are capable of so simplifying the discussion that they actually understand it. Gone is the traditional attitude reflected in the comment that the speaker was so wonderful that very few fathomed the depth of what he was saying. People nowadays feel that they have wasted their time if

they have listened to anyone without understanding all that he has to say. Even if they don't actually understand, they must believe they understand.

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Friday, January 12, 1940

I read through this week Jung's Yale Lectures on "Psychology and Religion." I am much impressed by the basic assumption of his psychology, namely, that the vast sea of the subconscious which surrounds the little isle of the conscious is dominated by racial (i.e. alogical) representations. But I don't see what bearing that has on the fundamental problem of reality or the existence of God.

The Meaning of Reconstructionism

It is practically the third day that I am struggling to articulate anew the meaning of Reconstructionism. I have a clear and trenchant idea of what I want to say about it, and yet I find it most difficult to give that idea sufficient explosive power to clear away the stupidities that litter up Jewish life and enough transmission force to strike where it should. The difficulty I experience in getting facts and ideas to come to my mind when they are wanted leads me to conceive the relationship of the conscious to the subconscious in terms of a different figure from that of an island to its surrounding sea. To me the conscious is like a faucet which you can normally turn on and off at will or better still, like one of those spring faucets which you have to press for the water to come, and the sub-conscious is like the reservoir the water of which flows through it when open. People with creative minds are blessed with a tremendous reservoir of sub-conscious thinking.

I shall try again the device of utilizing this journal as my alter-ego to elicit whatever sub-conscious thinking on the subject of Reconstructionism is still left in me:

The main idea I wish to develop is that Reconstructionism is the expression of a deep anxiety for Jewish survival on a plane of worth-while life not merely survival but creative survival, not merely ~~an~~ existence but salvation. Such anxiety can naturally be felt only by those who are so bound up with Jewish life that its possible extinction is contemplated by them with greater dread than their own death. To realize that we are mortal is to die once, ~~ix~~ ~~ix~~ but to conclude that the cause which makes our life worth-while is not likely to survive is to die twice. For that reason alone Reconstructionism cannot be expected to appeal to the majority of Jews. Most of them either prefer not to harbor unwelcome prospects or welcome the prospect of Jewish disappearance; their only regret is that it is not near enough.

The Reconstructionist is a realist in that he believes in looking facts in the face, however disagreeable.

The anxiety of the Reconstructionist derives from a sense of moral realism which does not share the despair of the pessimists among us, like Klatzkin, E. Kaufmann and the Pealestinian Jews generally, who take for granted that there is no hope for Judaism in the diaspora, nor the confidence of the optimists like the orthodox who are certain that a faithful remnant is bound to survive and that they are that remnant. Realism impels the Reconstructionists to veer away from passive reliance upon miracles. The prophets who foretold that a remnant only would be saved were trying to save the whole people, and did not confine their efforts to the few faithful followers. Moral realism likewise negates despair, because it is based upon the knowledge that no people perishes ~~uxcept~~ through suicide, and that our people which hitherto had most reason to commit suicide was disinclined to do so. On the contrary reconstructionism is a familiar phenomenon in Jewish history, as an alternative to the suicide that

other peoples resorted to under similar circumstances. The destruction of the first commonwealth was followed by reconstruction. The existence of suicidal tendencies as mentioned in Ez. 37. So was the destruction of the second commonwealth. R. Johanan ben Zakkai reconstructed the Jewish state into a Jewish church. Christianity was the suicidal movement of that period. Likewise in our day, the alternative to suicide is reconstruction.

Reconstructionism derives from a sense of realism which evaluates the crisis in Jewish life for what it actually is. The term reconstruction is associated in ~~the Jewish~~ people's mind with catastrophic upheavals akin to earthquakes, wars, revolutions. Reconstructionism by its very name wants to call attention to the magnitude of the upheaval in the world about us in order to prevent us from underestimating that upheaval. Such underestimation has led most diagnosticians of our present crisis to draw the wrong conclusion: that the crisis is due to innate human wilfulness, which broke out time and again in our career, and which found expression in disloyalty to God and his Torah. The suicidal tendencies which characterize the present crisis have nothing in common with the easy going laxity that led our ancestors to forget the God of their fathers or to play dalliance with other gods. They arise from the augmented difficulty in living as a Jew. Reconstructionism is intent upon making our people fully aware of the complete overturn in human affairs and mentality during the last century and a half and upon indicating the connection between this overturn and the loss of the mainspring of the traditional Jewish loyalty in the face of the most cruel torture. What kept the Jew loyal to Judaism was his implicit faith in the indispensability of his people to his salvation. For all Jews, prior to the French revolution salvation meant life eternal and that bliss which can be secured in only the hereafter. The Jews conceived thus of salvation because the

people among which they lived conceived of it in the same way. When everybody around us assumes that it is futile to expect this world to be the place for complete self-fulfillment as a human being, it is difficult to assume that it is. The reverse is equally true. If everybody takes for granted that the world we live in is the only one in which we can achieve the purpose of our existence, we will find it difficult to set up other-worldly salvation as our goal. We know how difficult it is to keep our watches regulated according to sun time when everybody has set it an hour ahead. How much more difficult is to try to regulate our lives on a schedule of eternity when everybody else regulates his life by a schedule of three score years and ten.

So long as all the world lived by a philosophy of life which placed the center of gravity of human existence in the hereafter the Jew had no reason for doubting the advantage of being a Jew. For in the light of that philosophy it was easy for him to regard affiliation with his people as the guaranty of life eternal (p.91) He had no difficulty in meeting the challenge of Christendom and Islam which ~~he~~ tried in vain to prove to him that he had forfeited the means to salvation because he adhered to the Torah, the earlier revelation of God's will and not to the later revelations which they claimed superseded the Torah.

I do not imply that merely the adherence to a particular world outlook made it easier for a Jew to be loyal to Judaism, though the significance of a world outlook should not be minimized. I am stressing the greatness of the discrepancy between the pre-modern and the modern outlook on life and conception of salvation because it helps to sum up in one symbol the wide gulf that divides the social, economic, political and religious endeavors of the modern world from those of the medieval

The difficulty which the modern Jew experiences in living as a Jew is actually due to the infinite changes which have taken place in all these types of endeavor, and which are both effect and cause of the modern conception of salvation as this-worldly, even if spiritual, and as consisting in the attainment of life, liberty and happiness in the here and its now.

From this point on I trace the connection between the first effects of the various changes, of which this worldly salvation is the symbol, on the rest of the world (the reordering of mankind into modern states) and on the Jews (in their emancipation and the adoption ^{by} ~~of~~ them of the same notion of the summum bonum). But the subsequent effects on the non-Jews of this worldly conception showed themselves in the rise of power-nationalism and with the economic failure of the new political set up in the rise and growth of anti-Semitism. The subsequent effect on the Jew is an acute struggle for individual existence with no prospect of either other-worldly or this worldly salvation.

The problem which confronts the Jew today is: how should he carry on this struggle for individual existence in the face of anti-Semitism? He can carry on that struggle in one of two ways. One way is spend himself in combating anti-Semitism in order that he might become entirely assimilated and cease to be a Jew. If anti-Semitism would abate he could identify himself so completely with the totalitarian tendencies of the modern nations as to throw in his lot completely with its power-politics. Or he can join his individual struggle for existence with that of his fellow Jews, and transform the common predicament into the collective struggle of the Jewish people for survival. In the very effort at collective survival it is inevitable for him to evolve ideas and ideals which are a very part of a democratic nationalism. The struggle for Jewish survival

is a struggle for an order of society in which right and not might is to govern the relations of the state to the citizen and of the state to other states. Thus by choosing the alternative of Jewish survival the Jew avows allegiance to a conception of salvation which spells universal justice and peace.

In order however that the Jew shall choose the second course and that in making this choice he should feel that he is moving in the direction of its objective, it is necessary to formulate a plan of Jewish living in which there is an intelligible connection between the purpose of Jewish survival on a high level of existence, i.e. (?p.92) creative survival, or salvation, and the means to it. It is at this point again the point of counteracting the consequences of the shattering impact of the tremendous upheaval that Reconstructionism asserts its realism. This realism involves dealing with Jewish life organically. No one type of effort which concentrates upon one aspect of the Jewish problem as if it were the whole of it can remedy matters. This does not mean that everyone must try to do everything to strengthen the synagogue, be an active Zionist, do anti-defamation work, take part in educational endeavor, try to help in the relief campaigns. There is need for division of labor, and for more Jews to take part in all these activities. But it does mean correlating all Jewish endeavor and bringing them within the framework of the dominant purpose of Jewish survival.

In order that all Jewish activity shall make for Jewish survival on a high plane it must be animated by a realism which could lead us to recognize that we cannot leave the problem to solve itself ~~through~~ through spontaneous evolution of the necessary values or through a violent revolutionary break with the past in which we would content ourselves with Judaism as a way of speaking rather than as a way of concrete living. Realism in dealing with a chaotic social and

spiritual situation finds expression nowadays in planned reconstruction of social forms, in directed reinterpretation of ideas and ideals and in stimulated creativity in the enlargement of life's horizons. Reconstructionism, therefore, calls for a three point program which includes the reorganization of the social structure of the Jewish people (Palestine and the diaspora), the fostering of cultural means of self-expression to make Jewish life interesting, and the reinterpretation of religious values and forms and the redefinition of ethical aims and means with a view to making the effort at Jewish survival to coincide with the struggle of genuine democracy to further the ends of universal justice and peace.

Most of what I have written out above I have said and written on numerous occasions. But I must overcome my inner resistance to repetition. I have been reading recently Kant's "Theories of Ethics" and no matter how much I read and whatever page I open Kant says the same thing over and over again. It seems that the only way to drive any new truth home is to keep on repeating it in a thousand different ways. In spite of all that has been said and done by the Orthodox, Conservatives and Reformists to counteract the centrifugal forces in Jewish life, there has never been any frank recognition on the part of the rabbis or laymen of these groups that the Jews are confronted with the possibility of extinction, and that unless something immediate and drastic be done that possibility is apt to become an actuality. Hence I must not expect that calling the attention of our people once to the imminence of the danger is sufficient. The principle of (p.93) is the only one which might bring results.

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Sunday, January 14, 1940 Ezekiel as patron saint of Reconstructionism

If Jewish life were inclined to take unto itself patron saints I would choose the prophet Ezekiel as the patron saint of Reconstructionism. Both the circumstances of his age and the message of his prophecy correspond accurately to those which are part of Reconstructionism. Then as now Jews in the Babylonian diaspora saw no future for their people, and then as now the most pertinent message is "Wherefor shall ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezekiel even went so far as to lay down the principles of reconstruction which we should do well to follow in our own day: reconstruction in ideology as illustrated by his emphasis on individual responsibility and reconstruction in organizational aspect of Jewish life as illustrated by his utopia for the returned captivity portrayed in the closing chapters of his book.

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Wednesday, January 17, 1940

It is already late Wednesday night and in spite of my having practically laid aside everything else these last few days for the sake of the address on "The Meaning of Reconstructionism," I still have a great deal of work to do on it. It took me the greater part of Sunday to find the appropriate start for the address. The basic reason, probably, for the difficulty I have in writing out the address is that I am not endowed with the requisite writing ability. But among the contributing factors to that difficulty are my depressed state of mind and the lack of any encouraging or stimulating sign that Judaism can live in America. On the contrary the more I see what those in a position of leadership in Jewish life are doing, and how unqualified those whom the Seminary is training for leadership are to understand the magnitude of their task and responsibility, the more despondent I grow. When I asked the class in the Seminary yesterday to read the Midrash there wasn't even one out of about 40 men who

was prepared. I was beside myself with exasperation at the complete apathy of the entire student body. And when I upbraided them, all that they could say was that they had 15 different subjects and could not find the time to prepare. I know that this is all humbug. If the men really cared they could find time. They waste plenty of it. The real reason is that they do not care. All they are interested in is to pass in subjects like Talmud, History and Bible where it is a question of knowing a number of dry unrelated facts, which have nothing to do with the dangers and problems that confront us today and which call for no deep personal concern or wholehearted interest in the Jewish struggle for existence. How little fundamental knowledge they get in those courses, how little they actually understand even those subjects which they are compelled to cram, comes out again and again in the sessions with me. I had to spend nearly a whole hour yesterday to impress upon them the fact that it is impossible to understand important sections of Bible and Rabbinics without having an idea of the mental concept of the universe with which the ancients operated. One imagines that long before they enter the Seminary they would learn the world picture implied in the account of creation, the story of the Flood. And yet even those who are about to be graduated are completely ignorant of such basic facts.

And as for my "friend" Finkelstein, the Seminary is becoming alive with all kinds of diversions from the fundamental needs of Jewish life and thought. It is resorting to all kinds of sensations and publicity stunts, but getting ever further away from the realities of Jewish life. This "Interfaith" business for which one of the trustees -- the rich glove manufacturer Littauer gave some money is a typical example. He refused to give money for the rabbinic or the teachers' training courses because he doesn't believe that they are needed. But for anything that would bring Jews and Gentiles to-

gether he was willing to give liberally. And so these courses were established. It is certainly not to be expected that ~~any~~ ^{any} genuine thinking or mutual understanding can ever come out of such efforts. Everything controversial will naturally be evaded. There will be a make-believe emphasis upon what Jews and Protestants (not Catholics) have in common. Fundamental questions like tolerating differences, and eliminating discrimination at least in academic circles won't even be mentioned. But the Seminary will be advertised. If as a result of such publicity the Seminary would acquire resources which it would ultimately apply to the crying needs of inner Jewish life, one could forgive all this pretense. But as usual, the wrong means will never bring about the right end.

I attended the first luncheon lecture of this "Interfaith" business. It was given by Niebuhr of the Union Theological. It dealt with prophetic religion. He spoke fluently and impressively but what he said was basically unsound. He is a Barthian. Nothing plays so conveniently into the hands of obscurantists and hypocrites as Barthianism. Hence its danger to present day Judaism whose only hope is the healing light of humane reason and disinterested integrity.

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Wednesday, May 24, 1940

Last Monday night I delivered the lecture on "The Jewish Religion of Tomorrow" at Rabbi Israel Levinthal's Jewish Center of Brooklyn. Lena and I had dinner with the Levinthals before the lecture. Levinthal gave me a flattering introduction and I returned the compliment. The attendance was good and I spoke well. Having had a cold before I went to speak I became hoarse as a result of the strain.

In spite of my bad throat I taught at the Seminary yesterday. Everything went off well.

Rabbi Jacob B. Agus (formerly Agushewitz) is a graduate of the N.Y. Yeshibah but a sympathizer of Reconstructionism. His rabbinical position however does not permit him to come out openly with his views. Not long ago he got his doctorate at Harvard. His thesis dealt with Buber and Hermann Cohen. When he came to see me about a month ago and told me these facts about himself. I asked him to let me read his thesis. I got it last week and read it through. I found it to be a very clear and organized statment of the two philosophies of religion. He thinks clearly and writes well and is genuinely interested in the problem of religion.

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Sunday, February 4, 1940

I got through with my paper on "The Meaning of Reconstructionism" a week ago. This means that it took me about 19 days to work it out from beginning to end. On the whole, that isn't so bad, since I kept up with my routine schedule of teaching during that time, except for the two free Sundays. Fortunately I did not have to sermonize. The only time I lectured was at the Jewish Center in Brooklyn. That took up about a full day of my time.

Yesterday I preached my monthly sermon at the SAJ services. Yesterday was typical of those days when I go through mentally the most gruelling experience. This is what takes place: On Friday I feel I have an important message to convey. My topic is "Religion and the State." It all seems so clear. I want to point out the superficiality of the "Back to Religion" slogan one hears these days and to indicate the kind of religion we need, if we want to find a way out of our present crisis. It should be a religion which emphasizes not merely cult and belief but mainly justice. And justice must mean not only redress of wrongs and harmonization of conflicting interests but also equal distribution of power. Hitherto the State, which

represents the organization of power has been based on concentration of power in the hands of the few. If we are to have an ethical state, the religion to which we should turn should counter the tendencies of power to gravitate into the hands of the few. All power states -- theocracies, tratiocracies, plutocracies, bureaucracies and the proposed technocracy - resort to religion for sanction. But their religions instead of combatting the concentration of power actually help to maintain it.

Satisfied that I have an idea that is worth preaching, I walk down to the synagogue Sabbath morning. I get there about 10:00 and I discover about two dozen strangers seated together way in the front, while the rest of the synagogue is practically empty. I know at once that there is a bar mitzvah and I am annoyed that I hadn't been told about this before. Nathanson drones the service mechanically. I sit down in my chair on the platform. By the time the reading in the Torah is begun a few SAJ worshippers who are not members straggle in. Lubetkin, the SAJ member of the Board who acts as usher (a service which he has rendered faithfully since the founding of the SAJ) divides the Aliyot. I see him ask about four or five people of the bar mitzvah party to accept an Aliyot but they refuse because they can't recite the benedictions. Very few of those who do come up are able to recite those benedictions. Lubetkin informs me that all these people are recently arrived refugees. The reading of the Torah is gone through mechanically. Some more people have in the meantime come in. The important SAJ members are conspicuously absent. They are away in Florida. The few who are present - I begin to think - will be no more sympathetically disposed to my sermon than those who are away. When I get up to speak I find myself confronted by new people who don't understand English. I have to keep my eye on the three or four people whom I wish to interest, and my eye on

the typewritten notes which contain additions by hand - hard to make out. I lose sight both of my listeners and of the notes. The sentences come out in lumbering fashion. I find it hard at times to get the right word. I feel my voice getting strident, and that I am out of touch with my audience with which I am struggling hard to establish connections. And so I labor for about 55 minutes. I am all in a sweat. Just that day Nathanson takes it into his head to lengthen out the service; we get through much later than usual - about 12:45.

In the afternoon there is the Seudah with Semel scheduled to read Yiddish selections. His vanity is catered to. Ira who had practically sworn he wouldn't ask him to resume his readings, had written to him and now he keeps on announcing our good fortune that Semel is again with us. Quite a good attendance for the Seudah, due I believe to Semel's taking part rather than to the promised discussion of my sermon. After the coffee and cake Nathanson leads in the singing of two songs - usually the same ones he always has the people sing. Ira gives Semel a big mi-she berakh. Semel reads a Yiddish selection about the Jewish people. Then come questions about my sermon. Nathan Musher knowing Osserman's negative reaction to what I had to say asks whether I didn't have in mind public ownership rather than socialization. "People are afraid of the word ~~so~~xialize. It sounds like socialism." I answered at length. My point is that the emphasis of the sermon was not on the method of combatting concentration of power, but on the need of having religion function as a means of calling attention to the injustice that was bound to prevail so long as power was concentrated in the hand of the few. I dwelt however upon the importance of realizing that ethics called for socialization of the natural resources, etc.

In spite of my passionate plea to identify religion with the striving for distributive justice, Poses, the newly elected chairman of the SAJ Board, and Katcher, one of the members, tried to put me in the wrong by making it appear that I was advocating communism and bolshevism.

All in all a Sabbath at the SAJ is to me generally a heart-breaking experience. The exceptions are rare.

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Wednesday, February 7, 1940

Perhaps I underestimated the favorable reaction of the audience to my sermon. The accompanying correspondence from E. W. Fiss and S. E. Osserman would seem to indicate that they were impressed by what I had to say. So what?

Dr. Glushak, a physician, was for a long time an occasional attendant at our services. Now he is a mourner and comes regularly. His father, who died recently, was a cantor and a fine musician. Glushak himself sings well, I am told, and keeps up his musical interests. Last Monday he came to see me, apparently at Beimel's instigation to urge me to introduce the cantorial music into our service to organize a choir and to have a Friday night service at which special attention would be given to the rendition of Jewish liturgical music. He also pointed out the need of raising the standard of the cantorial profession by having an institution like the Seminary take over the training of cantors.

What a pity that so important a field as Jewish religious music should be permitted to go to waste and so excellent an opportunity to develop Jewish esthetic values as afforded by the organization of Jewish choruses should be so neglected. What a stupid people we are!

A trivial incident but significant of the spread of anti-Semitism is the following: I was walking yesterday morning to the Seminary. On Broadway between 121 and 122 St. a group of small boys between the ages of 8 and 10 were on their way to the Catholic school which is located on 121 St. near Broadway. As they noticed me, one of them walked over toward me, and viciously called out Hello, Comrade! This shows how far Coughlin's anti-Semitic propaganda is poisoning the minds of the Catholic masses against the Jews.

I believe that the anti-Jewish campaign of the Catholics may be accounted for on the ground that it is intended to divert the minds of the non-Catholics from the Catholics who are charged with unAmericanism because of their recognizing the authority of the Pope as supreme. Since the best defense is attack, and since it would not do to attack the Protestants, the Coughlinites proceed to attack the Jews, thereby hoping to vindicate their own Americanism.

I attended a week ago yesterday the luncheon lecture at the Seminary given by Niehbur and yesterday the lecture given by Kingdon, president of Newark University. In between I listened a week ago today to Julian Huxley. Talk, talk, talk and no action will drive me to distraction.

The three organizations, the Jewish Social Workers, Jewish Center Workers and the National Jewish Education Association will hold their conventions this year at Pittsburgh toward the end of May. They have been after me to lead the discussion at one of their joint sessions on Jewish cultural programming in America. If I were not on the verge of losing faith in mankind and in the Jews, I should avail myself gladly of this opportunity to interest workers for Jewish causes in the Reconstructionist movement. But the mere sug-

gestion that a man like Hecter would be one of the discussants was enough to repel me from leading the discussion. He is an atheist and an assimilationist. Making his living out of Jewish social work, he must find some *raison d'etre* for Jewish life. He accordingly finds it in religion only. That is "religion for the other fellow." Since he is above the need of religion. His conception of religion is, of course, the conventional one, a compound of magic, the Ten Commandments and post-mortem existence. The fact that he was to be one of the discussants indicated to me that there was no real interest ~~in~~ on the part of the program committee in solving the difficult problem of living as a Jew in America, but merely to fill up time -- a sort of convention ritual. The invitation came to me from a number of people including Miss Ephraim a worker in the Pittsburgh Jewish Center in charge of the educational activities there. I refused them one and all.

Then came a telephone call from Dr. Slawson, head of the Jewish Board of Guardians. He urged me to accept the invitation and I yielded. The reason I yielded has nothing to do with any change of mind on my part. I was not in a more hopeful mood about life in general and Jewish life in particular, when he spoke to me. I happened to have called him up some time ago in behalf of my nephew Nathan Israeli who is at present the mainstay of my sister and her husband and who is apt any day to lose his government job. In order to make sure that Slawson will try to help Nathan find a job I accepted his invitation to speak at Pittsburgh.

In connection with this invitation, London of the Jewish Welfare Board came to see me yesterday. I thought I would learn from him the specific angle of the subject I was to deal with in my address. Instead I merely learned what I had known before about Lurie

and Hexter and that the reason he hesitated identifying himself with Reconstructionism was that he thought it set itself up as a new denomination alongside Orthodoxy, Reform, etc.

Last night I went to see the movie "Grapes of Wrath" based on the novel of that name by Steinbeck. I seldom get full esthetic satisfaction from the best of movies, and this one was no exception. But as a social sermon it had a tremendous effect on me in that it called my attention to one of the flagrant injustices of American democracy. I regret that I hadn't seen it before I delivered my sermon last Sabbath. It would have helped to drive home the point I was trying to make about the failure of religion hitherto to function as an ethical force. I was very much affected by the part played by the preacher who had discovered the irrelevance of his preaching. It struck home

How can I be otherwise than disoriented when, on the one hand, I am struggling to formulate a conception of religion based on the thesis that religion is essentially the search for salvation and not for God, and, on the other hand, I am weighed down by a terrible sense of futility from the standpoint of alleviating the misery which human beings inflict on one another. The very blessings of my sheltered life weigh heavily on my mind when I think of the millions to whom the world is an inferno where their bodies and minds are tortured daily by friends in human guise. How can I sit calmly in my study and formulate ideas about self-fulfillment, life abundant, life satisfactory, salvation, when people are driven off their lands on which they had lived for generations, and that they had cultivated with the sweat of their brow?

Then again if I were to do nothing but yield to passive grief over the fate of the suffering millions of human beings, neither my lot nor theirs would be in the least improved. I can take an oath Jesus never had the slightest notion of the depths of misery into which human beings are sunk, and that it never occurred to him that he might bring them redemption by giving his life for their sake. That story as a historical fact is the height of absurdity. As a myth however not of theological sin, but as representing the wish-thought of anyone who is sensitive to the man-inflicted human agony in which the greatest part of mankind spend their lives from the cradle to the grave, it is incomparable. Who with any human feeling would not pray to be crucified a thousand times, if such crucifixion would put an end to persecution and exploitation?

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Saturday night, February 10, 1940

Whenever Chipkin comes to see me I feel like Job when he saw the third messenger arriving. He lives at the Seminary and is in ~~constant~~ contact with the students and with a few of the trustees. Everywhere he comes across the slime of slander left by Finkelstein who is trying to convince everybody that I, the Teachers Institute and the Reconstructionist are trying to foster secular religion, whereas he and the Seminary are fighting for the genuine kind of religion which is "prophetic religion." I believe that when he realized that I emphasized religion in all that I wrote and taught and he could no longer charge me with outright secularism he resorted to the new strategy of drawing a distinction between secular and prophetic religion. As a matter of fact this time he happens to be right as regards the distinction, but I don't think that he himself really believes in what he implies when he speaks of prophetic religion. He wishes to give the impression that he regards religion as of trans-

cent origin and as supernatural. At the same time that term suggests to most people the ethical emphasis. For his purpose he could not make use of a happier term. It brings him into line theologically with Kaufmann Kohler and with Paul Barth. Reinhold Niebuhr uses that term. Finkelstein may have gotten it from him. In any event as a weapon of attack it is as dangerous as a sharp rapier and can be used by a Jesuitical theologian with tremendous effect against a rationalist humanist theology, such as I seek to develop. It enables a Finkelstein to hunt with the hounds and run with the hares, to be at home among the Reformists and among the Orthodox. Reconstructionism plays into his hands by presenting a shining mark of attack, which furnishes him a *raison d'etre* for his "prophetic religion." This "prophetic religion" is entirely compatible with the denial of the Orthodox doctrine of the supernatural revelation at Sinai and yet it has a supernaturalism of its own, so that one who holds to it can play fast and loose with his religious beliefs and utilize it as a cover for whatever move he wants to make to acquire more power. This is wherein its jesuitry lies.

Every other while Chipkin feels weakened by the continuous hammering at our work by Finkelstein and his lieutenants, especially Simon Greenberg. He then comes to me for advice. This time he wants to give up the Women's courses at the head of which Finkelstein put in two non-descript women, Mrs. Hendricks and a daughter of Dr. Goldwasser (my pet bete noir of long ago). I advised him against doing anything that means abandoning a position of vantage.

In the general community another injustice is being perpetuated. The Jewish Education Association which consists of people who would give annually considerable sums to Jewish education, has been absorbed by the N.Y. Committee for Jewish Education which is administering the Friedsam Fund. The people who wield the power come from

Federation circles. They have little interest in religion and are antagonistic to positive Jewish life. They have never contributed and still do not contribute a cent of their own to Jewish education. Men like Strauss (president of Emanuel), Judge Roseman, Willen, Lowenstein, etc. It was only because Burke, the Catholic executor of the Friedsam will have insisted upon the Jewish Education Association being represented in the new organization that Semel was put on the committee in charge of the Fund. But he and the few who are genuinely interested in Jewish education are hopelessly outnumbered. Semel who is not a rich man, used to give \$1000 annually in addition to all the energy he gave to the cause. Mary Liebovitz gave \$5000. But in the new set up they will have little influence. They are regarded by the assimilationist snobs as representing Orthodoxy and nationalism, and that is sufficient ~~in~~ reason for keeping them in check.

It seems to me that the principal implications of Judaism as a Civilization could best be explained by stressing the primacy of environment. Judaism as a civilization is Judaism as environment.

Last night we had Salmon Schocken, Dr. Senator and Dr. and Mrs. Kliegler for dinner. After dinner Dr. Senator led a discussion on the questions: What is necessary to make of Palestine the cultural center that Ahad Ha-Am hoped it would become? And what should the University do to help Palestine become such a center? His idea is that Jewry in the diaspora, including America, should not wait till anti-Semitism forces it to engage in menial labor and to accept a lower standard of living but that of its own accord, impelled possibly by some religious drive like that of the Hindus who are fighting British domination, it should redirect its economic life and break

away from its present occupancy of the white-collar professions. The example of the Haluzim in Palestine should be followed by Jewry everywhere. He did not state what he had in mind about the University. But Kliegler argued that the University ought to abandon the scholastic standards which were in vogue in Germany until recently and devote itself to the specific social, economic and political problems with which Palestine Jewry is wrestling. Assuming that they would be dealt with in an ethical spirit, the solutions arrived at would constitute a contribution to civilization.

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Wednesday, February 14, 1940

The celebration last Sunday of the fifth anniversary of the Reconstructionist came off far more successfully than I had expected. It took place at Pierre's on Fifth Ave at 61 St. There were about 200 at the dinner. Most of the guests were from the SAJ. A large number of Seminary students came in for the speeches. Milton Steinberg acted as toastmaster. The entire Editorial Board with the exception of Mortimer Cohen, were seated on the dais. The only entertainment was provided by Madame Gorby who sang Hebrew and Jewish songs. Steinberg with his usual matchless fluency set the proper tone to the celebration. I liked very much his accentuation of the ideological rather than the personal side of the movement. My address on "The Meaning of Reconstructionism" took an hour and ten minutes. I managed to hold the attention of the audience, in spite of the fact that except for the first five minutes the entire address was read. I made a special effort however to approximate the style of address that is given extemporaneously. After I got through Steinberg announced the formation of the Reconstructionist Foundation and he called upon Guzik, a lawyer and member of the SAJ, and Botein, a lawyer and member of the Park Ave. Synagogue, both of whom are members of the

Board of the Foundation, to say a few words. They both spoke well and to the point. Finally Ira was called upon and in a brilliant little speech appealed for memberships and contributions to the Foundation. I understand that about 60 became \$5.00 members and that \$1100 came in in contributions. Harry Liebovitz ~~xxxx~~ contributed \$500.00. Everybody went away highly elated and inspired.

The next morning (Feb. 12) Prof. Janowsky of City College, a former student of mine at the Teachers Institute, gave a lecture at the SAJ House on "The Status of Minorities in a Democracy." Although we had a small attendance, I am glad that the lecture was held, because it necessitated Janowsky's formulating a statement on the position of the Jews as a minority group in this country. The lecture will appear in one of the subsequent numbers of the Reconstructionist.

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Friday, February 16, 1940

Utilizing in part Sun Yat Sen's words in his famous will, I would say: Our one end in view should be the elevation of the Jewish people to a place of freedom and equality among the nations. To attain this goal we must bring about a thorough awakening of our own people and ally ourselves in a common struggle with all individuals and groups that labor to bring self-determination and self-fulfillment within reach of all human beings.

How remarkable that the method of Reconstruction should have been referred to by him as the one needed for the awakening of his people!

I would even adopt his "Three Principles of the People" as applying to us: Nationhood, Democrach, Livelihood.

Nationhood calls for the establishment of a center in Palestine where Jews can live entirely by their own civilization and the fostering of Judaism as a secondary civilization in countries where they constitute minorities.

Democracy calls for the application of the ideals of freedom, justice and peace in all human relationships from those of the family to those between nations.

Livelihood calls for the collective concern for the elimination of economic handicaps due to discrimination.

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Saturday night, Feb. 17, 1940

Could anything be more urgent than that we Jews attend to the following:

1. The nondescript status of the Jewish people is its worst inner affliction;
2. It is highly imperative to formulate and strive for a definite and tenable status;
3. That status must be translated into a program for rendering Jewish survival creative.

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Wednesday, February 21, 1940

Why is it that people don't realize that the fundamental question with which human beings will have to grapple is not the abstract one whether there is a God or there isn't but rather whether life is worth living. The fact is that with the increase of knowledge and sensitivity on the one hand and with the persistence and augmentation of stupidity on the other life is getting to be more and more unbearable.

I am led to make the foregoing observation as a result of a tussle I had a little while ago with a seminary student, Moshe Davis. His sermon on "The ~~Quintessential~~ Function of Art in Jewish Life" turned out to be a keen disappointment. Though quite talented artistically and dramatically, he does not shine in the formulation and systematization of ideas. The consequence is that even after trying to make something out of the sermon he gave last week in class, he feels that

he has not had much of a share in the development of its main thought. This led him to find fault with the way I teach the Homiletics, referring particularly to what I did in class yesterday with a sermon that was presented by another student, Greenberg, and by two others who gave outlines, Kazis and Jacobson. I found so little in what they said that I had to reformulate the idea which they tried to state, and to develop it on altogether different lines from those they followed. This procedure of mine seems to have displeased the three concerned. To me all this information came as a shock, because I had been rather pleased with myself for having done what I did with the threadbare proposition about all things not being good or evil in themselves but being one or the other according to the uses to which they are put. The text was the one about the jewels of the Israelites in the wilderness having been used both for the golden calf and for the tabernacle. What I made out of the text was that we misdirect our efforts toward improving human life if we condemn the instruments which men employ as their evil purposes. But what are evil purposes? The concept of idolatry supplies the answer. For idolatry is essentially either abandoning oneself to some dominant impulse (p.103) or playing the God.

What the men want is to be praised. They are terribly ~~thin-~~ skinned and envious of one another. It is probably ridiculous of me to expect them to be otherwise. But then what is this whole damn business about ethics, religion and spirituality? We expect those who go in for athletics not to be flabby. Why shouldn't we expect of those who train to be moral athletes, supposedly to show that they ~~possess~~ possess a little more moral fibre than the average. Is that asking too much? At least, if they don't possess any moral fibre, why aren't they ashamed of their lack but parade it as though it were something to be proud of?

Saturday, February 24, 1940

In an article in the Journal AMA Feb. 24/40 student section, I have just read the following: "The child whose tranquility and security have been threatened by marital discord of the parents grows up into a person surrounded with thick banks of gloom, who, although he recognizes that he is no longer dependent on his parents for happiness and security, still approaches each new episode with fear.

My own childhood years were largely of the nature described in the first part of the foregoing sentence yet I do not approach each new episode with fear, unless the episode is very definitely one to justify fear. The "thick banks of gloom" which surround me have nothing whatever to do with my childhood experiences, but very definitely with the apparent futility of my calling. Or take the general feeling of anxiety, under which most people labor nowadays. Why is it necessary to seek its cause in some condition in the past when there is the obvious fact that the world is topping about our heads, and that there is not a day that does not adduce new evidences of man's insanity and inhumanity. If Jews are more subject ~~an~~ to anxiety feelings than other peoples, is not the actual growth of anti-Semitism sufficient to account for that fact without ~~smuggling~~ ^{groping} in the subconscious? If I would stop reading the newspapers and ~~manage~~ ^{manage} to be ignorant of the vast crime of nationalism which is being perpetrated throughout the world I'd be as happy as a lark in spite of the fact that my "tranquility and security, etc." I am inclined to think that most of this psychoanalysis, psychiatry, etc. is a lot of hokum. If the ~~xxxxxx~~ doctors would take greater pains to discover the physical disturbances accompanying the psychic disorders and would treat the former whenever possible by the appropriate physical means, they would be of some help.

I saw last week "Juno and the Paycock." I found it to be excellent character portrayal and splending acting. The ever quoted remark of Aristotle in his ~~Ratt~~ Poetics about the purgative effect of tragedy somehow strike me as unreal every time I see tragedy on the stage. That this Irish household went smash is shown in this play to be due to Paycock's constitutional laziness. What's there so grand about that? For all I know such laziness may be due to some glandular defect or some other congenital cause. So how does that help me? Can I feel more hopeful or more heroic as a result of this meaningless suffering?

This week I saw one play and one movie. The play was Maxwell Anderson's "Key Largo," with Paul Muni as King. For some no good reason the critics did not take to it and it is going off the boards the coming Monday. To me it was a great play from every point of view. It tore open the basic problem of all human life. Is there any meaning to it? And it left one wondering, as a great play should, since the arguments on both sides are equally balanced. Here, if anywhere, Aristotle's remark does apply. For plumbing the depths of reality, it is in my humble opinion, worth ten Hamlets. "Hamlet" the play abounds in quotable gems of poetry that have become imbedded in the English language, but as "holding up a mirror to nature," it strikes me as quite irrelevant.

The movie which I saw was "Gone with the Wind" based on Margaret Mitchell's novel of that name. It is a grand spectacle, but the love story strikes me as sheer carpentry, an artisan-like putting together of a lot of commonplaces about a woman running after a man whom she in her inner-inner-innermost heart doesn't love and forever running away from and repelling the man whom she in her inner-inner-innermost heart does love. That kind of imaginary character naturally affords opportunity for endless episodes for fat novels and movies that last for hours on end.

Last night Selma, Saul and Hadassah were with us for dinner and Selma, Hadassah and Lena set me straight (although I still have my doubts about their interpretation) concerning the ~~xxx~~ real nature of Scarlet O'Hara's love for Ashley. We got into such a heated discussion that we called up Judith and Ira to give us their version, and they sided with the women folk.

Later Albert and Bertha Schoolman and Chipkin came over. After the children left I had a very warm and interesting discussion with them on the question of the status of the Jews among the peoples of the world. It seems that only we professional Jews are drawn into the discussion of basic Jewish questions. It is just a significant little fact like this one that raises "thick banks of gloom" around me.

And now - 10:00 P.M. - I've come from seeing the movie about Paul Ehrlich. It was a revelation to me how much that man had to contend against before he could demonstrate the truth of his theories and the efficacy of his methods. But when one deals with tangible realities like chemicals and bodily ailments there is a likelihood of demonstrating the truth of a theory. But when it comes to the intangibles and imponderabilia of human life, or as the movie has it, the diseases of the soul, greed, hate, etc., what chance is there of ever proving you are right? And maybe you are wrong, however sincere or well-intentioned you are.

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Wednesday, February 28, 1940

Like the much quoted character in one of Moliere's plays who suddenly discovered he had been talking prose all his life without being aware of it, I've discovered that I've been living up to the advice that every one ought to have some hobby without being aware of it. My hobby is keeping a journal. I herewith declare all my

hitherto avowed reasons in previous volumes for keeping a journal null and void. This only goes to show that one knows one's own mind as little as one knows anything else in the world. The truth in my case probably is that I am trying to rationalize my inability to indulge in some real hobby like sculpting, stamp collecting, photography etc. So I try to palm off my journal as a hobby. If my life depended on giving an accurate accounting for what it is that impels me to go on with this journal, I couldn't do it.

The fact that we know so little about the self is an added reason for treating it, if not as an illusion, at least as an exceedingly exaggerated entity. This is why I feel so fully the force of the truth that life is not in us but that we are in life. We probably have as much to do with what we think as with the beating of our hearts. A truer description of what happens when we think would probably be to say "it thinks in us," the "us" being merely a conventional term which "it," or "life" has achieved to facilitate its own processes.

Milton Steinberg, who is on the hunt for certitude keeps on insisting that the God of religion must be identical with the whole of reality or being. He therefore objects to my assumption that the God of religion is only that aspect of reality which makes for human salvation. I believe this is a very fundamental issue that ought to be thoroughly canvassed. It seems to me that one of the main reasons religion has been ambivalent in its functioning instead of being solely a force for good, is just this very tendency to make God co-extensive with all of reality, including evil. This has led to the defense of evil and to the toleration of it instead of to unequivocal effort to eliminate it from human life. Take a simple illustration.

As identical with all of being, God was bound to be regarded as the cause of sickness as well as of health. Hence it was necessary to explain sickness as punishment for sin, as discipline, trial, etc. The book of Job with its failure to explain evil whether as suffering or as sin is testimony to the inconsequential complications we become involved in when we insist on making God responsible for all that is, instead of viewing him as the power that makes for all that ought to be.

What is there outside God? Chance, accident, chaos and in man's world all kind of human blundering. No one is responsible for them. That is just the point which is missed by the dualistic religions, any more than anyone is responsible for darkness. This does not imply that chance, chaos, etc. are nonentities and unreal. They certainly are real, but the fact that no one is responsible for them is the very reason for their existence, and hope of the possibility of their elimination as soon as the power that is responsible - God - succeeds in invading them and bringing into them his order and his will.

In any event in the foregoing we have a real fundamental issue in the philosophy of religion, whereas the question of belief in God vs. belief in the God-idea is an unreal one and can only be matter for future logomacties.

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Thursday, February 29, 1940

This morning a special meeting of the Reconstructionist editorial board took place at my home. It was called at the suggestion of William Kolodny, the director of educational activities at the 92 St. YMAH. Present were Edidin, Henry Rosenthal, Chipkin, Euker, Ira, Steinberg, Alper, Kolodney and myself. Kolodney is a graduate of long standing from the Teachers Institute. He worked a few years for Benderly.

After that he took charge of the educational work in the Pittsburgh Y. He succeeded so well that from the \$5000 granted at first for that work, he got as much as \$30,000 (including fees for tuition). The courses were in the main general, but he managed also to have Jewish courses established. The success of the latter was due mainly to the fact that the University of Pittsburgh recognized them as part requirement for degrees in Semetics. The last few years he has been functioning in the YMHA here. He has built up a large clientele for the educational work and has increased the membership from 5000 to 6900.

In spite of the outward success he has achieved, he is not satisfied because his colleagues among the more Jewishly-minded center workers have been taking him to task for not having used his administrative abilities to develop in the large number which he has succeeded in attracting to the Y an interest in Jewish life, thought or art. They charge him with catering in his educational programs and his club work to the popular indifference to Jewish culture, instead of trying to break down that indifference. His contention is that, despite appearances, he is actually working in the direction of intensifying Jewish consciousness in those that come to the Y and ultimately developing in them a taste for Jewish cultural values. That objective cannot be attained directly because of the tremendous prejudice against Jewish cultural values, that has to be overcome. He starts out with the assumption that an institution like the Y must regard itself primarily not as an educational but as a recreational center. Before he came the recreational activities tended to be of a very low calibre -- billiards, ping pong, bridge, etc in addition to gymnasium and pool. The result was that Jewish young people of intellectual calibre had no respect for the Y. They would never think of availing themselves of Jewish activities, because these meant to them religion, and therefore only good for old women and children. The first thing therefore

to do is to offer educational courses and artistic performances of a high order. These attract the more cultured among our people who thus come to respect the Y and to be proud of a Jewish institution. This itself is an achievement from the viewpoint of Jewish consciousness. The next step is to introduce gradually Jewish activities also of the highest order obtainable. Before long these people will become interested in those activities. But unfortunately there is little in the field of Jewish artistic production that is first rate, and if anything of an inferior standard is offered them they will be repelled all the more, and it will be difficult ever to interest them in Jewish cultural values.

In spite of the seeming plausibility of his contention, I feel that Kolodney is merely trying to rationalize what he inwardly feels to be an anomalous position for him to take. There are contributing factors to his being on the defensive. One is that Rabbi Rosenthal has started an adult school of Jewish studies. The more Kolodney succeeds with his educational and entertainment program, the more he is likely to hamper the necessarily humble efforts of the adult school. Secondly the chairman of the committee in the educational activities is Milton Steinberg, for whom it is equally anomalous to sponsor those activities, if they have no influence, from a Jewish viewpoint, on those that take advantage of them. Steinberg didn't say much. He had to leave in the early part of the discussion because he had to attend a funeral. He did say however that Kolodney has not availed himself sufficiently of Jewish talent, even when it was of a high order.

The one who made the most important contribution to the discussion was Ira. He argued as follows: The Jewish Center has no *raison d'etre*, unless it is oriented toward the cultivation of Jewish values. If those who are in charge of Jewish Centers assume that they must have only such Jewish activities as can compete successfully with what

general sources of amusement or recreation can offer, then there is no hope of ever cultivating in our people a taste for Jewish cultural values. By offering in a Jewish institution general programs in which there is nothing of Jewish interest, the negative attitude toward Jewish cultural values is reenforced. The purpose of a Jewish Center should not be to cater to existing wants but to foster a sense of need, to condition the minds of Jews so that they will learn to appreciate Jewish art. If we want to create a Jewish art life, we cannot afford to reckon with the supercritical audiences. How will Jewish artists and musicians ever get a chance to perfect their art and music if we will not permit them the use of our facilities, until they have won their spurs elsewhere? We must be so eager to create Jewish cultural values that we will be satisfied to put up at first with very inferior products in the consciousness that they are our own, and in the confident expectation that they will ultimately lead to products of a very high order. We must have faith in the validity of our purpose to create Jewish values, and devote ourselves to fostering a sympathetic attitude toward that purpose. We must teach our people to be happier over the humblest achievement that is ours than over the most finished art which comes from the outside.

A most astounding fact was brought out toward the end of the discussion when Alper suggested that the YMHA Bulletin be gradually changed from a mere sport sheet to one which gives primary place to Jewish ideas and values. Kolodney in reply mentioned the fact that the Bulletin was run by a self-constituted clique which is a communist cell. They even succeeded in blackmailing him into abandoning a plan to democratize the representation of the clubs. Their success is largely due to the fact that Nadel, the executive director of the Y advised Kolodney to yield to their pressure. I am not sure I am reporting these facts correctly, but of one thing I am sure and that

is that Nadel has been frightened into giving the communist group opportunity to bore from within, for fear that they might start a general stampede from the institution. Into this kind of an institution Federation is pouring vast sums of money, when real creative Jewish effort is not given a chance because of the bitter antagonism of the Federation czars to anything positively Jewish.

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Friday, March 1, 1940

This morning I had a stormy conference with three seminary students who came to discuss the sermon which they had to ~~prepare~~ prepare for class. The main sermon has to be written by Jacobson, a fourth year man, and the outlines by Chertoff and Dembrowitz. Jacobson had chosen as his topic: What Jews must do to survive as a people despite persecution? Before he proceeded very far with the explanation of his topic which I got him to formulate only after much cross questioning, I realized that he was skiing over his subject and taking big leaps over difficult places instead of flowing through it. I finally succeeded in having him ask this question: What is that fullness of Jewish life which would enable Jews to survive? and in having him itemize the answer as follows: 1) A definite system of belief about God, Torah, Israel; 2) A sense of unity experienced through living a communal life; 3) The practice of mizvot and study of Torah; 4) Jewish cultural values. Before, however, I brought him to that point, he tried to be evasive and was resentful of my effort to pin him down to an accurate formulation. He thought he would get away with a lot of hot air about educating the children and attending services. It hadn't occurred to him that he was tackling the basic problem of Jewish life and that he must reckon with hard realities and perhaps insufferable difficulties. When I pointed out to him that it was impossible to expect Jews to find Jewish life desirable, unless we had

community, he answered that the average Jew would regard the establishment of community so difficult that he would despair of Judaism, if that were made a condition.

At one point of the discussion he was so sullen that he lost track of the connection of the ideas, and I was about to break off the conference. He apologized and I continued with the development of the thought. After he himself realized that one ought to know what to believe in as a Jew, if one is to defy persecution, he admitted that he himself did not know what a Jew must believe in. As far as he himself is concerned, the traditional theology is out of question. But so far he hasn't found anything to replace it. This was said by a young man about to be graduated, in the presence of two other students. He is a good looking chap, makes a good impression, oratorical like Israel Goldstein, married and an occupant of a pulpit for the last year or two. Everything points to his becoming perfectly sleek and self-satisfied, and here I come along with my upsetting talk about problems and realities. He even has the degree "doctor" which he got from the Brooklyn law school for a trifling little paper on a legal subject. In the heat of my tirade against the rabbis who by their refusal to reckon with the realities are permitting the devastation of Jewish life to be consummated, I opened the Bible and pointed to the verse in Isaiah 56:10 (p.11)

The men were shocked out of their torpor by those sledgehammer words of the prophet.

It seems that Jacobson finally saw that I was not altogether wrong in demanding of him a radically different approach to the subject he was to preach from the one which he had taken at first. I pointed out to him that it would not be taken amiss if he were to postpone dealing with that subject until he has learned more about

Judaism. If on the other hand he insisted on treating it now, it would be necessary for him to admit that the question of belief is too complex for discussion in that sermon. When he realized what I was driving at he said: "But we have never been taught to see ~~xx~~ problems. Where in our general education are we made to feel that there are problems for the solution of which we are responsible? The people certainly don't want to be made aware of problems."

Could anything be more revealing of the inner rottenness of Jewish life than the experience I had yesterday with Kolodney and today with Jacobson?

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Saturday night, March 9, 1940

A week ago today Shalom Spiegel called. I like him personally as much as I ever did, but I wish I knew how to break down the barrier that divides him spiritually from me and that prevents him from joining the Reconstructionist group. Is it a barrier of belief or of temperament? The fact is that I cannot get to the bottom of what he believes about God, prayer, the Jewish people. Is he a mystic or isn't he?

He quoted Steinschneider as having said that the function of "Judische Wissenschaft" was to provide Judaism with a decent funeral. It looks as though the Jewish scholars with their complete avoidance of anything that has to do with the burning problems of the present are verifying the truth of Steinschneider's observation.

Spiegel also mentioned the fact that I was the only one with whom he ever got a chance to discuss the present status of Jewish life. Often as he goes to see Prof. Ginzberg, he never ventures to broach such questions to him because the mere mention of them would cause Prof. Ginzberg to tremble with excitement. Apparently these scholars are afraid to face the realities of the present and prefer

to forget them by escaping into the past. I see in this a most ominous portent for the future of our people.

More immediately portentous of disintegration of Jewish life is what Albert Schoolman told me today concerning the difficulties Dushkin is encountering in his work. Willen and Hexter both social workers holding important executive positions in Federation here, are on the board of the Jewish Education Committee. Recently Dushkin's office put out the first number of a pictorial magazine for the children of the religious schools. It contained two pictures dealing with Rashi: One was a scene in an ancient synagogue where old time Jews sitting and studying the Talmud, the other portrayed a modern Hebrew school where children were studying the Bible. The comment in Hebrew script indicated the fact that "Rashi" was the subject of study both in olden and modern times. These pictures were objected to by Willen, because they were exotic and anyhow "why should the children be taught yiddish." He thought that the Hebrew script was Yiddish. This is the kind of person who has to pass on Dushkin's Jewish educational activities. The other learned authority Hexter objected to the fact that on a reprint of a photograph of a medley of various newspaper clippings there appeared somewhere the statement in very fine print that a number of ~~illegal~~ illegal immigrants entered Palestine. "Is it right," Hexter stormed, "for children to be given the impression that it is proper to steal one's way into a country?"

Whatever will happen to Judaism, what I have discovered concerning to function of sancta in a civilization and their relation to religion is an objective sociological truth that could throw a great deal of light on numerous social phenomena. It is sancta and not the ideas and beliefs associated with them that constitute the individuality of

religion and that differentiate a religion from a philosophic system.

At the present time I am trying to formulate the place of Kabbalah and Hassidism in traditional Judaism. I find it difficult to do so in terms of ideology, because except for the emanation theory (the exact significance of which it is questionable whether the Kabbalists really grasped) there is hardly anything in Jewish mysticism that is not read out of the rabbinic tradition. There are ideological divergences from rabbinic ideology in Kabbalah and Hassidic writings. But I find that both divergencies and agreements are quite immaterial when we want to determine the place of K and H in traditional Judaism. The important fact about them is that they succeeded in giving a new vitality to the Bible and rabbinic writings by reinterpreting them in terms of those new theosophic and theurgic interests which appealed to the Jews of medieval and pre-modern times.

This morning I preached at the SAJ services on the subject "Democracy vs. Philanthropy." My thesis which I derived from the ancient controversy between Pharisees and Sadducees concerning the defrayal of the cost of the daily offerings and its outcome as represented by the statement in Shekalim I, was as follows: Whatever task devolves upon a people as a whole must be assumed by every member of that people as an obligation, and should not be left to goodwill or generosity of the few. This is one of the important implications of democracy. I applied this principle to the upbuilding of Palestine which being the duty of the entire Jewish people must be assumed as an obligation by every Jew. Therein it differs from the settlement of Jews in San Domingo or elsewhere. This is symbolized by the Shekel, and is the basic significance of political Zionism. Political in this instance has merely the connotation that the rehabilitation of Palestine is the obligation of every Jew, and not the usual one of intrigue for the sake of obtaining some undue advantage over any other group.

The main body of the talk consisted of a survey of the process of democratization as it has developed in American efforts at the relief of the poor. I divided that process into three stages: 1) the pre-war stage; 2) from 1920-1930 and 3) since 1930.

Except for one or two places in the 55 minute talk, when I couldn't find the right word, I spoke with comparative ease and fluency and managed to hold the attention of the audience the entire time. I had simply made up my mind that I was not going to have any regrets after I was through, and so after concentrating sufficiently on the main points in the talk I proceeded to speak without paying the least attention to my notes. The contents of this sermon were of such a nature that if I hadn't let myself go, the sermon would have been a rank failure. As it was, it turned out to be one of the most successful sermons this year.

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Wednesday, March 13, 1940

On Monday (March 11) Chipkin, Dinin and I met at Dushkin's office with Dushkin to discuss plans for the practice school which the Jewish Education Committee is likely to subsidize for the Teachers Institute. I regard this as the most auspicious development in the history of the Teachers Institute. Throughout all the years that the Institute has been in existence, it has not received the least recognition or encouragement from the Seminary Board of Directors. Its function and personnel are entirely alien to them. If it weren't for Adler's sanction of its budgetary requirements it would have been liquidated long ago. But even Adler as he grew older and under Finkelstein's influence crystallized in his own mind the stereotype that I was the incarnation of a secularized Judaism became more alienated from the work of the Teachers Institute. This new development, I hope, will redeem the Teachers Institute from the danger of ineffectiveness to which Finkelstein has been trying to reduce it.

Personally I have all the reason in the world to be grateful for this finding myself working with Dushkin and Chipkin (Chipkin is now vice-director to Dushkin) in this project, because we understand one another and are interested in helping one another in furthering the aims to which the three of us are heartily devoted. I consider myself fortunate in having both of them as my friends.

The foregoing circumstance reminds me of the interpretation I gave yesterday in class of the passage in Bereshith Rabba V which speaks of the various objects which God gave to the world as gifts. I explained the notion of God's granting gifts as analogous to the fully developed doctrine of grace in Christian theology, and pointed out that it furnishes an excellent criterion for distinguishing

theistic from humanistic religion. Theistic religion is in truer accord with experience in that it recognizes how little some of the most important values in human life can be regarded as the purposed achievements of man. Their existence must be recognized as emanating from a Power other than man - God. Accordingly, the deepest emotional reaction in theistic religion is bound to be thanksgiving as expressed in the benediction (p.113) .

The connection with the circumstance mentioned above is that the chain of events which have brought me into close association with Dushkin and Chipkin, whose cooperation in Jewish educational work is to me invaluable, is an illustration of divine grace. Without having done anything directly to bring it about, its significant to me is that of a gift from God.

But if I can be so appreciative of the good that falls to my lot, why do I have so little control of myself and break out into old-womanish scoldings of the students, because of their lackadaisical attitude to the work in Midrash and homiletics? I was horribly disagreeable in class yesterday. Something must be bothering me.

I am not sure that I know what it is - a kind of general discontent with life, with Judaism, with myself. I must make a special effort and take myself in hand. I wish, though, I knew how. This is certainly a case for personal prayer. For me to sit down to formulate such prayer is like asking a diagnostician to invent a cure for an illness from which he suffers when he is too sick to go about his work. A personal prayer for this inner struggle of mine should have been formulated long ago. I feel certain it would have helped me.

Another interesting point I had occasion to make yesterday was in answer to a question put by Waxman. He questioned the logic of my contention that since it is futile for Jews to combat anti-Semitism or to meet it on its own terms by resorting to dejudaisation, it is wiser to resort to the alternative of intensifying and deepening our life as Jews. As evidence he quoted the case of an Avukah appeal to students that was based upon the same kind of reasoning and that merely called forth the feeling that each one must do the best he can with his own life, and forget about Judaism. Admitting the force of his argument, I maintained that the logic in any appeal to Jews to be loyal to Judaism is not of the demonstrable type but is the logic of life, of the will to live. I resorted to the analogy of the argument used with one who is about to commit suicide. In strict logic, it is scarcely possible to prove why one who has nothing but misery to look forward to should continue to live when he can find surcease from suffering. The only kind of logic one can resort to is that which inheres in our will to live. And at this point I discerned a new angle. It is the following:

In pleading with a would-be suicide to desist from his purpose, we are impelled in part by the fear that under similar circumstances we ourselves might be driven to follow his example, if he consummates his act. It is the will-to-live in ourselves pleading in reality with

ourselves not to yield to the suicidal urge. Likewise those of us who have been habituated to living and thinking as Jews plead with those of our people who finding nothing in Jewish life worth living for as a Jew and ready to "die" to Judaism that they should hold on to that life and try to make it worthwhile.

Of late I have resumed work on the series of lectures I delivered last summer at the University of Chicago. My problem at present is how to interweave in the description of Traditional Judaism the philosophic and the mystic trends. I recognize, of course, that the philosophic trend is in no way to be compared in scope and depth of influence with the mystic so much so that immediately preceding the French Revolution which is the turning point in modern Judaism, Jewish philosophy was practically forgotten while Jewish mysticism threatened to engulf the entire Jewish people. But the question with which I am grappling is how to connect both trends organically with the version of Judaism as nationhood plus a method of salvation? The nationhood represents the element of otherness and the method of salvation the element of difference in mode - both of which elements constitute the Jewish differential.

In the first place is it necessary to find a category which might cover both philosophy and mysticism in relation to the two constituent elements of Judaism? As a rule they are treated as parallel developments in Judaism. I believe this is based on a mistaken notion of their relative importance in traditional Judaism. It is as though one were to consider the movie industry on a par from the standpoint of recreational significance, with a few little theatres in which highly artistic productions are experimented with. In reality mysticism was entirely integral to traditional Judaism. It was bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh, even though some of the breath of life was derived ~~from the same source~~

from non-Jewish sources. On the other hand the philosophic writings were culled forth by the challenge of Greek philosophy, especially Aristotelian - a challenge which troubled only the intellectually elite. In meeting that challenge Judaism necessarily recognized the validity of the rival method of salvation - reason, and at the same time placed itself in the position of being on the defensive. This could not contribute to the popularity of philosophy, which thus remained esoteric despite its appeal to reason, while mystic love which is generally regarded as esoteric achieved great popularity.

The true significance of Jewish mysticism can best be grasped if, instead of viewing it as a development parallel to that of Jewish philosophy or scholasticism, we identify it as the culmination of an organic synthesis of the element of nationhood and the element of salvation in traditional Judaism. It is conceivable for instance that such factors as those of a common code of law, communal organization and sense of mutual responsibility, the institutions that insured the ~~trans~~ transmission of tradition etc. might function as a means of facilitating the cultivation of beliefs and practices that were regarded as essential for salvation, without there being any intrinsic relation between means and ends. In fact it is because in some of the modern trends they are thus viewed that the proposal is made to eliminate the factors which constituted Jewish nationhood and to retain only the element of salvation. What Jewish mysticism really tried to effect was such organic interweaving of the two elements in Judaism that at no point could one say which was means and which was end.

A negative implication of the foregoing is the one that Jewish mysticism does not comprise beliefs and practices that are different in kind from those which were formulated by the Tannaim and Amoraim who are the authors of rabbinic or traditional Judaism. The former are merely different in intensity of emphasis from the latter. If

mysticism is the acceptance of an idea or a practice on the evidence of intuition or of faith, where there is the alternative of experiment or reason, then surely the entire traditional ideology may be characterized as mysticism. Kabbalah and Hassidism merely elaborated further on those evidences of both intuition and of faith which constitute the content of rabbinic teaching.

In order however to understand just what is involved in achieving that kind of organic relation between the elements of nationhood and salvation, which is the specific contribution of Jewish mysticism it is necessary to call attention to the factor of sancta. The heroes, texts, events, objects, etc. that emerge in the course of a people's history as foci in the self-awareness of that people - in other words its sancta - discharge the double function of 1) conserving that people's otherness, identity or individuality and 2) of providing the individual with the chief means to his salvation. Jewish mysticism did not merely stress and elaborate the traditional ideas about God, Israel, Torah, man's place in the world, the relations between him and God, the meaning of good and evil, and ~~in~~ numerous other teachings as well as provide further meanings for the laws and precepts including their intricate details. Jewish mysticism at the same time enriched a thousand fold the importance of the Jewish sancta, viz: the Torah, ~~the~~ Hebrew language, Palestine, the Sanctuary, the Sabbath and festivals, etc. To achieve that purpose it merely had to bring to the surface and give larger scope to Gnostic influences that had led a subterranean existence in Judaism from the days that a book like Daniel was admitted into the canon. Those were the influences that were responsible for the esoteric teachings subsumed under the categories of Maase Bereshith and Maase Merkabah. From the standpoint of doctrinal content there is very little in Jewish mysticism which was not anticipated in Gnosticism. But what Kabbal did was to integrate all that

~~Gnostic~~

Gnostic lore into the sacred texts primarily the Torah, and secondarily the rest of the Bible and rabbinic lore - Halakah and Aggadah. The Zohar would never have become the Bible of Kabbala if it were to have set forth its teachings as general truths instead of as interpretations of the Torah and the other sacred texts. Like the Bahir which preceded it the Zohar is midrash, i.e. a utilization of the most important sanctum, the revealed texts. Hence the name Kabbalah, which signifies a traditional and authorized interpretation of a sacred text. (The talmudic application of the term Kabbalah to (p.116)). Thus was effected the organic interweaving of the element of otherness in Judaism with the method of salvation.

Thursday, March 14, 1940

The prestige which the mystic trend enjoyed in traditional Judaism was further enhanced by the pragmatic interests it sought to serve. They were threefold: 1) the redemption of the soul from the taint of mortality and the assurance to it of immortality by being united with or absorbed by God; 2) the attainment of desired objectives in this life through the wielding of such theurgic means as prayers, incantations etc.; and 3) the achievement of national redemption by resorting to such theurgic means - prayer, fasting, flagellations, etc. -- as would hasten the coming of the Messiah. These three purposes were not pursued simultaneously. Historically one of these purposes was dominant for a time, while the other two were kept in the background and in some cases entirely ignored though never excluded. Beginning with the close of the Talmud down to Abulafia the first was the dominant purpose. Abulafia initiated attention to the second purpose and the S_{afed} school emphasized the third purpose. The Hasidic movement was in the main an elaboration of the means to the achievement ~~of~~ of the second purpose. Thus in addition to utilizing the national sancta for the attainment of its purposes, Jewish mysticism in course of time

came to stress purposes which ~~are~~ dealt with both the individual and the nation, and which at the same time reckoned with the yearning for well being now and immortality in the hereafter.

All mysticism is essentially mythologizing. What differentiates it from primitive myth making and gives it a speculative character analogous to that of philosophy is its tendency to introduce the element of inner consistency and coherence in whatever series of mythical notions it operates with.

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Saturday night, March 16, 1940

It is too bad that I find it necessary to interrupt the serene contemplation of such ethereal subjects as mysticism, Gnosticism, etc. with a tale of woe about some of the ugly realities with which I have to contend. ~~At the moment~~ I have been quite unhappy for the longest time about the lackadaisical attitude of the members of the Editorial Board of the Reconstructionist. Outside of Ira who puts his whole heart and soul into the magazine and Eugene Kohn to whom it has become the sole prospect of earning anything, the other members of the Board take a sort of Platonic interest in Reconstructionism. Henry Rosenthal has joined the Board only recently. He at least has attended every meeting regularly and has carried out whatever task was assigned to him. I cannot say the same of the rest of the Board.

But my complaint against those men is not so much that they fail to participate in the responsibility for the work on the magazine or for getting the funds necessary to carry out the Reconstructionist program. A much more serious consideration is the fact that they don't measure up morally or spiritually to the standard that one has a right to apply to people who undertake to inaugurate a movement like Reconstructionism. The following will illustrate what I mean. One of the main objectives of our editorial policy is to combat the intimi-

dation and suppression of freedom of speech and press by such bodies as the Anti-Defamation League and American Jewish Committee. Just this afternoon, e.g. I waxed indignant over what Isidore Hoffman, Chairman of Committee on Social Justice of the Rabbinical Assembly, whom I met at Ira's had told Ira, namely, that the American Jewish Committee sent Rabbi Abels to the Rabbinical Assembly to with the "unkase" that the latter body issue a protest against Bertrand Russell's appointment on the City College Faculty in support of Bishop Manning's and other churchmen's protests. After I got through denouncing the American Jewish Committee, Ira unfolded to me this tale about Milton Steinberg, one of the main pillars of our Board:

The Hadassah organization which had felt beholden to Steinberg for the services which he had rendered it, wanted to make sure that the review of his novel "As a Driven Leaf" which was to appear in its "News Letter" would be acceptable to him. Those who edit that publication took special pains to find a reviewer of journalistic reputation. They thought of Maurice Samuel and asked Steinberg whether he approved of their selection. He was pleased with that selection and Samuel wrote what to me or any objectively minded person seems like a most glowing review of the book. He expressed, however, the opinion that the chief character of the book, Elisha ben Abuyah, emerges from the story as a contemptible intellectual prig, or something like that. For venturing to express and publish his opinion about Elisha, Maurice Samuel and the National Board of Hadassah have called down on themselves the furious wrath of Milton and his wife Edith, especially the latter, who has let loose a storm of scandal and blackmail. At her instance Dobbs-Merrill, the publisher of Steinberg's novel, sent their man to the editors of the Hadassah News Letter to tell them that his publishing house had intended to put in a big "ad" for the book, but withdrew it as a consequence of Samuels' review. The members of

the Hadassah National Board are very much disturbed over the incident, because they dread losing his cooperation.

As the matter stands it is the same kind of disgusting intrigue as goes on in the world about us, where honesty and freedom are being squelched by those who have power. What right have we Reconstructionists to take others to task for a wrong of which one of our foremost colleagues is as clearly guilty as they are? Apart from the fact that the review is effusive in its laudations of the book, and should delight the most vain and praise-hungry, the criticism of the chief character of the book should itself have been accepted as the highest praise by Steinberg, since such a portrayal speaks for the artistic objectivity of the author. But suppose Samuels had honestly believed the book itself to have been no good, and had had the courage to say so, would it have been right for the Hadassah to suppress his review after having asked him to write one? And would it have been honorable for Steinberg -- a rabbi, a preacher of justice and interpreter of the word of God - to engage in what amounts to blackmail?

And now the question which I put to myself is: How can I go on with the magazine, when I lack not only the active participation of the members of the Editorial Board - with the exception of those I mentioned above - but also the encouragement to fight for Reconstructionism which can come only from being associated with men who have a high sense of honor and of the right? I wish I knew how to extricate myself from the predicament without being guilty of moral cowardice. If I break with Steinberg I will bring on myself untold complications which will destroy my usefulness - whatever that is in the way of teaching and writing. And if I let the matter go, I feel I am condoning wrongdoing when I should be castigating it.

Such incidents are not only upsetting from the standpoint of the particular predicament they give rise to, but they are disconcerting from the standpoint of the very philosophy of life upon which my entire career is based. When Judith came out with the remark "Where is the Power that makes for justice?" I had nothing to say at the moment. As I think of the matter now I find I have to keep on believing in the existence of such a Power, if I am to go on living, but I must be resigned to the fact that it is not through me or my associates, nor through anyone connected with institutionalized religion that God has much chance of functioning.

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Monday, March 18, 1940

Hadassah

As Jewish organizations in this country go, I believe I am not mistaken in regarding the Hadassah as the one organization that makes for affirmative Jewish life, in the sense that it not only maintains professional Jewish workers who have a vested interest in Jewish survival but that it succeeds in winning among the laity believers in Jewish survival. For that reason I treat with respect the request that came to me from the members of the National Board of the Hadassah to expound to them my conception of Jewish nationhood. I am to meet them Wednesday night. This means diving once again into the subject I dealt with in the preceding volume of this Journal. But then I was in Palestine, and now I am in New York. This makes all the difference in the world, because then I could afford to take the will-to-Jewish survival for granted, whereas now that will itself is in question.

Faith in Jewish Survival

On the principle that we must be prepared for the worst, we would have to count on the possibility of totalitarianism invading this country. Such a prospect would paralyze all effort, because

it means the extinction of Jewry. Hence, if we are to plan the future at all, it must be upon the assumption that somehow the world will not turn entirely into a lunatic asylum, and that the forces that represent reason and justice will gradually come to their own. It is no more possible to adjust our lives as Jews to the onslaught of anti-Semitism than it is possible to plan one's life when one is alone in the woods which are infested with bandits who are out to rob and kill. If, God forbid, the nazis win the war and get a foothold in the near East, there is nothing to prevent them from driving the Jews out of Palestine and turning it over to the Arabs in exchange for the right to make it one of the strategic points in their world empire. This would mean the dashing of all the hopes we have centered in Palestine. This dreaded eventuality may actually come true. But there is nothing we can do about it. When we say "As long as there is life there is hope" the meaning is that if we are to act at all it is on the assumption that the dreaded eventuality will be averted. Likewise all our planning as Jews must necessarily be based on the hope that the ~~rampant~~ ^{rampant} evils of fascism and nazism will at least be halted in their progress.

Program for Jewish Life

The question which I believe the leaders of Hadassah want to have answered is: Shall Hadassah confine itself to the specific tasks like health work and the upkeep of Meir Shefeyah in Palestine or should it also engage in Zionist educational work with a view to developing a general philosophy of Jewish survival here? And if the latter alternative, what shall be the nature of that philosophy?

The two main propositions I wish to set forth are: 1) In all policies pertaining to Palestine we should have a long range view of what we want in order to know how to evaluate what we get;

and 2) Our approach to the upbuilding of Palestine must be integral to an interest in the survival of Jewish life in the diaspora.

Before the impact of western civilization on the life of the Jewish people, two important factors gave definite direction to that life: 1) a definitive ideal concerning Palestine, Messianism, with all that it implies and 2) a definitive status of the Jews as a corporate group -- a theocratic nation in exile constituting everywhere an alien body.

Western civilization in granting civic rights to Jews has rendered both factors inoperative. But its ambivalent and vacillating attitude toward the Jews has thus far interfered with their evolving two other factors in place of the two traditional ones which have become inoperative. 1) We cannot afford to proceed with the upbuilding of Palestine without a definite idea of our ultimate objective. We must envisage at least its main political aspects.

1. We must definitely disavow the notion of getting all Jews into Palestine.

2. The question of boundaries is of secondary importance as compared with the main political significance of Palestine, namely that of serving as a home for all Jews whom the nations do not want to harbor in their own lands.

3. The Jews in Palestine must be permitted to constitute the majority population in Palestine.

4. They must possess sufficient political independence to exercise cultural and religious autonomy.

5. Beyond that they should be willing to have Palestine become part of a large political body such as Arab Federation, British Dominion, or League of Nations, so as not to have to maintain any military organization of their own, or to conduct any

foreign policy of their own.

6. The relation of Palestine Jewry to the rest of world Jewry must be non-political but purely cultural and religious. All forms of cooperation between Palestine and diaspora Jewry must be on a voluntary basis.

With the foregoing as an ultimate program anything that Jews are compelled to accept which falls below that program should be accepted under protest as a temporary compromise, whether it be a matter of boundaries, immigration, land sales, etc.

Cooperation with Arabs in Palestine is extremely important but should be confined to the field of ~~economic~~ economic, ~~and~~ social and cultural endeavors. No political negotiations can be entered into except on the basis of the Mandate.

Interpretation to the Arab world of the Jews' claim on Palestine, and of their ultimate objective ~~and~~ is no less important than to the western nations.

II. Anti-Semitism (or the fact that we are not wanted by the nations) is not a sufficient basis for our claim to Palestine. That claim derives from the fact that Palestine has given us the group individuality which makes us identifiable. It is thus interwoven with our collective being, and it is only by bringing to bear on it our entire collective being that there is a possibility of our ultimately achieving our program with regard to it. Since it is impossible to expect that Jews living in ~~a~~ democratic countries should make their own migration to Palestine an objective, it is essential for them to strive for the survival of Jewish life in the lands which have adopted them, if they are to be part of the collective Jewish being which is to bring its entire weight to bear on the Jewish reclamation of Palestine.

A. The first prerequisite to Jewish survival in the diaspora is a formulation of a definitive status for this collective Jewish being or Jewish group individuality (otherness).

B. A second prerequisite is to define the relation of this status to our historic role as a religious group and to our status as citizens of the democratic nations.

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Tuesday, March 19, 1940

A. The only possible types of permanent or hereditary status for group individuality are those which imply a specific kind of social or political organization. Race is kinship and kinship confers status only upon the family unit in that it imposes special duties, responsibilities and rights upon the members of the family. Only in ancient times was race or kinship the actual or fictitious basis of tribal, clan or national organization. In modern times it is utilized only for sinister purposes in the organization of national life, but it is not a genuine basis for that organization. Hence even if the Jews constituted a distinct race or kinship it could not confer status on the Jewish group.

The two types of permanent status possessed at the present time by human groups are those of church and nation.

1. The church status is based upon conformity to a particular conception and program of salvation. This cannot apply to the Jews because of the wide diversity in the conceptions of salvation.

2. The status of nation is applicable to a group that is governed by a central state which can exercise coercive power over all the members of that group. The Jews have not been a nation (they have had a nation) in that sense ever since the destruction of the first commonwealth (Jews have lived in diaspora since then).

3. The status of nationality is applicable to a group which ~~through~~ though lacking a central state possesses a civilization that is the product of its life and which is governed by a common code of ethics and law. This was actually the status of the Jews before the end of the eighteenth century and must continue to be such if they are to function as a group.

B. The second prerequisite to Jewish survival is a clear understanding of the relation of our status as a nationality to our historic role as a religious group. This involves a conception of religion that can enable us to view it as a natural phenomenon of group life, hence as evolving in complexity and diversity simultaneously with the complexity and diversity of the group to which the particular religion belongs.

A religion viewed naturally is the self-awareness of a group, as it expresses itself in the assumption, on the part of each member in that group, that the group is an indispensable means to his salvation.

This implies a keenly felt need for self-identification with the group life. Such identification takes place when the individual enables the sancta of the group to function in his consciousness as a means of eliciting the best that is in him.

Hence from the standpoint of Jewish survival it is essential that for the individual Jew the sancta of the Jewish people have such vital significance as to elicit the best in him.

So viewed Jewish nationhood fulfills a religious function and is entitled to the rights accorded to religious groups known as churches, viz: to engage in cooperative effort on a communal scale. This solves the problem of correlating our status as members of the Jewish nationality with our status as American citizens.

Wednesday, March 20, 1940

C. A third prerequisite to Jewish survival is to develop Jewish content and activity. The real problem of Jewish survival is what to do with it as an end in itself. We are so busy trying to explain why live as Jews that we neglect the question of how to live as Jews. If Jewish life would provide an outlet for creative thought, activity and self-expression there would be no need of explaining why live as Jews. This calls for the elaboration of a three-fold program.

1. The fostering of constructive thought dealing with the social, the economic, the political and the religious problems of Jewish life in Palestine and in the diaspora.

2. The organization of communal life on such a basis as to call for participation of every man, woman and child in some Jewish activity.

3. The encouragement of esthetic creativity in all the arts with a view to giving esthetic articulation the entire range of emotions from those evoked by the most ridiculous aspects of Jewish life to those evoked by the most sublime experiences in Jewish religion.

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Thursday, March 21, 1940

The best part of the talk I gave last night was in the question and answer period. I express myself best when I have to think out a thought which I speak, whereas when the thought's all worked out carefully in notes, my speaking is labored. In the answers to questions I had occasion to point out the following:

The reason I dealt with the political and not with any other aspect of the ultimate objective with regard to Palestine was that the political aspect represented the very existence of

a Jewish Palestine, whereas the other aspects had to do with the quality of that existence, and were dependent upon conditions which were in a state of flux. Moreover the other aspects have to be determined primarily by the Jews in Palestine rather than by those in the diaspora.

The Ahad-Ha-Am conception of Zionism was utopian. Herzl's Zionism was based on the realities of life in that it saw in anti-~~Zionism~~ Semitism the main motivation to the reclamation of Palestine. But for the consummation of Zionism we need a philosophy of current events that would render the upbuilding of Palestine, which is precipitated by anti-Semitism, part of the forces in history that make for Jewish survival as well as for the redemption of mankind. This approach has a twofold advantage. In the first place, it ~~saves~~ saves us from the need of deploring the fact that Palestine is being repopulated by unwilling Jews instead of by Jews inspired with Ahad Ha-amism, and secondly it is in line with the traditional habit of so interpreting the course of events as to impress them into the service of Jewish survival.

This last point has to do with the general question as to the value of philosophies or interpretations of history. The human being in his self-adjustment to life is dependent upon orientation. The crudest theories about his environment and his own person are experiments in orientation. For that reason man is necessarily a myth maker. In the last analysis what he regards as absolute truth whether in the field of science, of religion or philosophy is a myth or mental construct. The only difference between truth and falsehood in any of these fields is the degree of inner consistency as well as consistency with the whole of experience. This criterion naturally includes the extent to which any "myth" helps us adjust ourselves to life. Of course there arises the question:

What do we consider "life"? As to that, however, we must assume some general agreement.

In effect, then, the Jews may be said to be the first to have introduced the tendency to achieve orientation in history in addition to orientation in the physical world. Our modern philosophies of history, such as Hegel's and Spengler's are experiments in orientation. Being individual experiments they represent literary cogitations. When they are taken up by peoples, those orientations themselves become historical forces. This is what happened on a large scale in the past with the biblical orientation and on a smaller scale with the rabbinic orientation as expressed in the midrashic versions of the Rome-Israel struggle. In modern times this has happened with the Hegelian and Marxist orientations. In my own humble way I am trying to effect an orientation which would give meaning and direction to the Jewish struggle for survival.

I have recently skimmed through Harry Infeld's "Israel in the Decline of the West." He takes Spengler's approach to history and applies it to the history of the Jews. Spengler himself, who apparently did not have much love for the Jews, give a most distorted and pilpulistic "interpretation of their history, in order to make it fit into his schema of Magician culture. According to Infeld the Jews passed through the four stages of their culture during the first thousand years of their history. Since then Judaism has been a "civilization." (Incidentally, his use of the term "Judaism" as analogous to the term "Hellenism" is excellent, and falls right into my lap.) But I have only a vague impression of the course he expects Judaism will or should take henceforth.

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